

WESTERN POTTER

(4)

Georgia Hughes.
March 28/66.

Publicity contacts
for Hycopt.

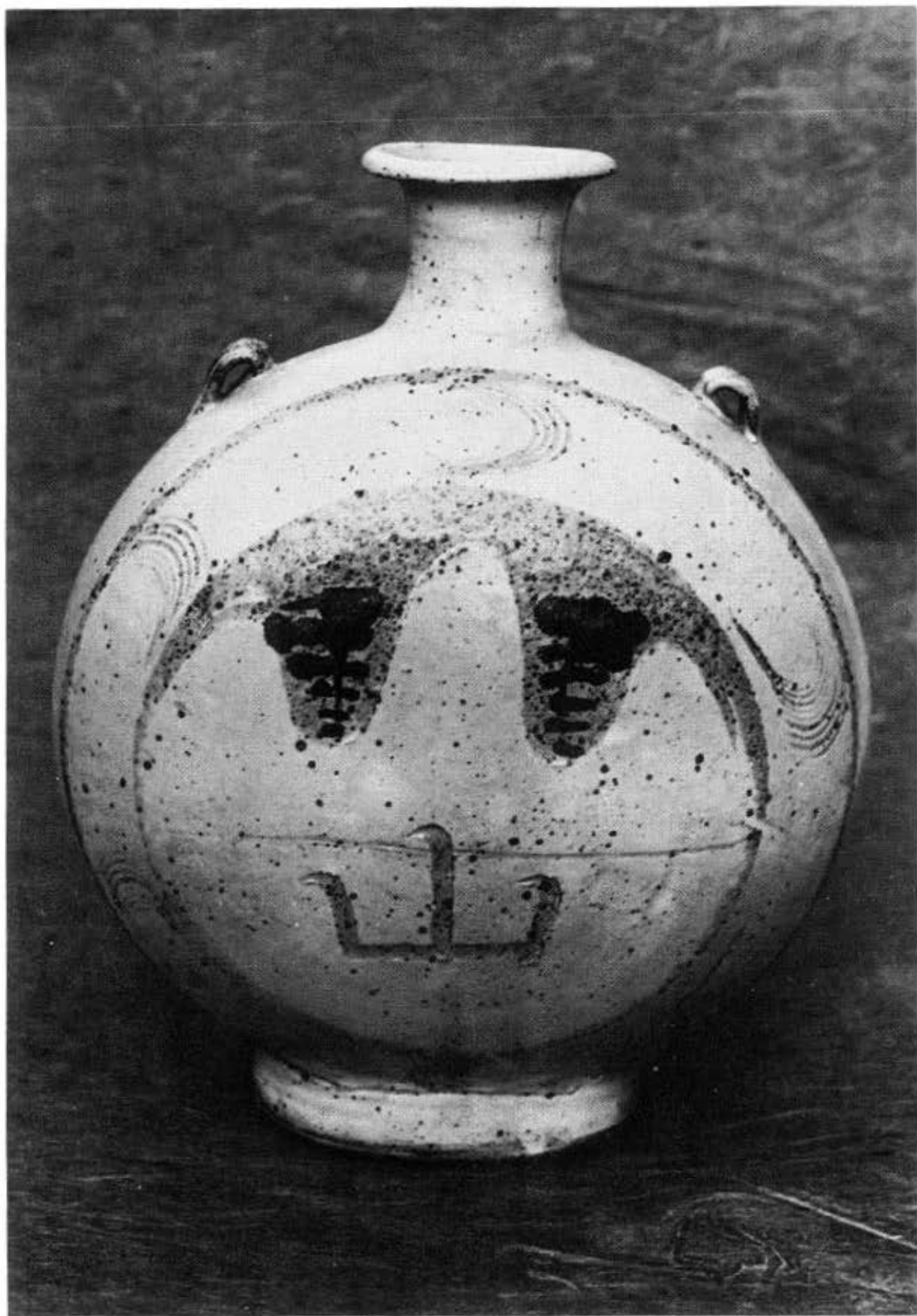
Report on first Hycopt. Nov 24/65. 10.
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Potters 1417.90

Grind - 321.90

(Hycopt. Nov. 65.)
First Harry Davis Workshop.





by
Bernard
Leach

EDITORIAL

We are privileged in this issue to have a contribution from one of Canada's younger poets, Mr. Gerry Gilbert. He has had a long association with pottery - perhaps I should say potters. He and his wife lived in a small moorland cottage near St. Ives, in Cornwall and came to know Bernard Leach, his pottery and the potters there. More recently he has been associated with John Reeve's Pottery in Devon, England. Gerry now resides in Vancouver. His poetry is well known in Canada; a book of his poems has been published and he has been represented in many publications in Canada, the U.S.A. and England. Mr. Gilbert notes that the punctuation, spelling, etc. are intentional.

The other day, an eminent art gallery director asked me why I didn't use more colour on my pots. He went on to say that there was a great sameness about pots (colour) all through the country. This may be superficially true but, of course, it doesn't matter. It is beside the point! One doesn't turn out pots that are pointedly "with colour" or "without colour", like the latest style in bath-tub colours. This is a commercial consideration - a consideration not at the heart of the genesis of a work. One would not think of questioning the sameness (colour) of classical Chinese celadon. Why were they all green? Why didn't the medieval English potters use colour? We wouldn't ask this really. It's silly. The important thing is a philosophical and aesthetic consideration at the heart. It doesn't matter what colour your pot is if it is a vital expression of your philosophy and aesthetic. We must be constantly alert to what in ourselves is motivated by commercialism only, which would be a naive, provincial, amateurish and futile expression. We must search for professionalism, in the true sense, in ourselves. This cannot be too strongly stressed. Don't be put off by people asking for "blue" pots if you have none, or others asking, "What's that supposed to be?" The strength and validity of your work will depend upon the degree of utmost conviction you bring to bear and the harmony you have with the material. It is difficult in this age but the question is always open, "What am I doing?" This is often forgotten in the escape to the technicalities of a craft.

Editor

President's Remarks

I often think that the name of our organization - The B. C. Potters' Guild - is a challenge in itself. The very name "Guild" conjures an image of a group of master craftsmen meticulously and lovingly turning out beautiful pieces of craft work.

This may be a mere flight of fancy, but the fact remains that we do have an organization with the objective, among others, of trying to continually improve the standards of ceramic work in British Columbia. And this objective is, I believe, one that we should keep constantly in mind.

Many means can be utilized to achieve this end. Our general meetings should be informative and educational, and many interesting lectures and discussions have been held over the years. At the last general meeting Mr. Stan Clarke showed a series of slides of recent pottery exhibits. One most beneficial type of meeting was tried a few months ago, in the form of a demonstration by Michael Henry and critique, which Mr. Glen Lewis handled with much interest and intelligence. Disappointingly few pots were submitted for criticism, and if this form of meeting is held again, we feel that every member would benefit from submission of a piece of work for criticism.

Another function of our organization is the arranging or sponsoring of exhibitions. The Hycroft sale was in a sense an exhibition of our members' work and did much to increase public awareness of hand made pottery. But exhibitions of high calibre, strictly juried, are perhaps the greater challenge, and we had the honour to suggest to the Vancouver Art Gallery, a Western Canadian Craft Show of such calibre and prestige. Mrs Shadbolt informs us that this show is tentatively scheduled for Autumn, 1966, and though the budget is not yet passed, she feels there is every likelihood it will be.

Also, the Guild can sponsor seminars and workshops, as it did last summer, with Mr. Hal Reigger. This year a three-day seminar is planned in April, led by Mr. Harry Davis, of New Zealand. This will be held at the U.B.C. on April 12 - 13 and 14 and will provide an opportunity for members to learn from an outstanding potter who has taught in West Africa, Latin America and New Zealand.

Many other activities are open to the Guild, such as the formation of a library, collections of films and slides, sponsoring scholarships and all should be undertaken with a view to promoting the improvement of standards. We are proud to be associated with one of the oldest crafts known to mankind, but we must push on to new horizons, and better and more imaginative work.

Eric Marsden

notes for potters

by Gerry Gilbert

28/2/66

A TRADITION FOR YOU

Going off in all directions just looking for a place to begin: to make myself clear: or freely alive in time (the bright confusion of that) I keep trying to end this sentence (sentience) and it wont ! 'TAKE CARE OF THE ENDS/ THE MIDDLE TAKES CARE OF ITSELF' but in this world (CRASH !) : the ends of my life are well taken care of: as they have always been, for peasants, whose work is to tend gardens: face life: as the samurai get to face death. It was hard to learn that as artists, we are not revolutionaries: no matter how radical it may sound, just to be here, in these present gardens. What size is the present? 'THE POET IS THE MOST CONSERVATIVE MEMBER OF SOCIETY' he saves the present, the moment of man. (the best books about poetry that Ive read, I found in Bernard Leach's library)

It's hard to remember now, when these notes began. & I see: your pots: you have begun. The question is how to continue: survive (live on) ...tradition (hand down) : as you hand down a body to your children...something lives on.

But is there anything else, of you, or the extensions into the world of yourself: which youve made: which could continue to be of use, worth, in our world (or even in other worlds, if they can find themselves free to continue, what has always been going on)

A potter, how did you begin? The 50s. When your great young desire was to be yourself, and willing to work at that, but there was no work that could decently be done. At artschool: valuable place, in that it was not (then !) the university, or the insurancebusiness, The weight on you. The possibilities: commercialart (they had designs on you) ... not so much that you had some Principle against it, but that it was finally such a bore ('& thats not what I wanted to be...') ... but for all that, commercialart was more... honest?... than Art, there: even though you wanted to call yourself Artist: but it sounded like such a dirty word: Art: certainly not something to: work at

'I want... ' We saved, out of all the junk and noise of those ideals, an "intrinsic conscience" ... it saved us: we were just not free, to give, ourselves: when it was not feeling right (& we did a lot of nothing... which turned out to be very usefully destructive) (we are constructing new --OLD-- meanings for such words as 'art') (want? ... what do we need !)

See how much painting has changed since then. The purposeful lack of originality in Pop. The new work involved in Op, & Kinetics. The useful imagery of Ob (scene) (!) Back then, Pollack showed very clearly just where to take care, and just where to take

(the freedom of) a chance. I look at the glaze of a pot, and really see a surface (on the face) That the seeing seems just what the surface is for (wonderful celadon!)
At a painting: I look for the forms to become intentional: images, or patterns. But the cup (it's plain what a cup is for !) the black breaks to kaki on the rim: thats just its nature (clever these orientals !) so thats what I see: nature: no faces, no targets (drink up!)

So, there seemed something right, especially then, about pottery/pots. as things, and as something to do. But the artschool, it was not the right place...and neither was your own first pottery...wonderful places: to play

& that personal thing: your own life (to be played with?) it was now ajar, unfixed: and that allowed you, by intention -- but mostly by the luck you learned you had to trust -- brought you to...where there was work (like at the Leach Pottery)

Slowly (quickly) these years: stomachs, heads, hands, eyes: you discovered (uncovered) : pots. 10,000 YEARS MORE than you. THE STANDARD (of) : most of the pots men have made. 'to be yourself' ??? rather: to join the (space) race: a Man; A POTTER. I mean, make pots.

The 'you' Ive been calling: is anyone over there: in the direction of a couple dozen people I know, or whose pots I know: in potteries, theirs or one anothers, (peasantpotters in a global village): at work (I hope): when I get thirsty, I still drink, from a cup, as I learned to do(less than 10 years ago)

WE ARE GETTING USED/TO FREE SPACE floating:
with lines (sight) between us, and points (touch)
we reach to

Seen from here: you: potters look like a
tradition: handing down pots: (sometimes of
a standard which can...) stand (or break!)
in a human world -- where theres always been pots

(and here, too)

BEGINNING WITH CLAY

I would say that instead of overly concerning oneself with the thing to be made, and consequently its technicalities, one should rather concern oneself with the material itself. This tends to unify the material, maker and object and can be a great liberating force with some people if fully realized.

We have chosen clay to use as a medium for making "something". What is this material clay? There are two or three ways of looking at it which are important.

- (a) You can describe it scientifically which should help you to comprehend its relationship to other materials. It will make clay mixtures and firing temperatures understandable. I like to think of the family of clays as a river with its source, a parent rock, granite. Granite decomposes over a great space of time, breaking down into feldspar and then into clay. If the clay is found at the source it is called "primary" or "residual" clay. Most kaolins or china clays are of this type. It is white and composed of alumina, silica and water, with hardly any impurities. The firing range of Kaolin is very high. Much of the experimenting for heat resisting nose cones for rockets is done with china clay. It generally is not very plastic by itself but is used in porcelain bodies as the main ingredient.

Water may transport some of this clay down by river or it could be moved by wind or glaciers. These are called secondary clays. The action of the moving water grinds some of the clay into finer and finer particles. Along the way the clay particles pick up impurities such as iron and alkali materials, etc. and organic matter. "Ball" clays are relatively free from impurities, are fine-particled and plastic. They will fire to 1300°C and above. These are usually the base for high-fire, stoneware bodies. Clays that have been moved by glaciers are usually uneven in particles size. The ordinary red, low-fire clays could have been moved by either water or glaciers. They have many impurities, the iron making them red, the alkali fluxes giving them a low-temperature range and the organic matter making them plastic.

Clay particles are flat and plate-like. When wet they will stick together rather like two plates of wet glass. They will slide horizontally though. This, of course, is the property of clay which makes it possible to build up hollow shapes without them collapsing.

- (b) What are the properties and qualities of clay? When dry, clay can easily be shattered and when put into water it breaks down. The water then becomes liquid clay. If this is then dried somewhat until it could be handled like dough, you then have the usual consistency for working. In this state it is plastic and can be thrown on the wheel, rolled out flat and then constructed into a shape. It can be built from pinching up small pieces. There are numerous ways of building things with clay. These are the qualities which should be explored and exploited for their own sake. The way you put your clay together is as important as the things you are making. Be honest to the material and let it show how it was made and/or handled.

It would be a mistake to always consider clay as a material to be made into something else - a pot. If it always has outside considerations imposed on it, it will never show its nature. This is somewhat a matter of perception and sensitivity.

- (c) A philosophy which is embodied in the material you use. Let me quote what the Japanese potter, Hamada says about his clay:

"Mashiko clay is by no means the best available, and it has been suggested that I should bring in a better clay from another source. However, I prefer to use the local clay, which after all, is an integral part of the village and its people. It is only because the clay is not first rate that I, a stranger to Mashiko, could master it in twenty years. If the clay was of better grade, it probably would have taken me much longer to learn to control it. Rather than produce poor work with good clay, I would far rather use a poorer clay and with it make the finest pot I am capable of making."

We will try to have continuing brief articles on "fundamentals" in forthcoming issues.

G. Lewis

VANCOUVER REPORT

Michael Henry Exhibition - Bau-Xi Gallery, Nov. 1965

Michael Henry is a graduate of the Vancouver School of Art. His work then was concerned with printing and drawing. When he went to England several years ago he had no intention of taking up ceramics. He travelled to St. Ives in Cornwall and subsequently, after having met Janet and Bernard Leach, began working at their Pottery. He hasn't stopped since. His pottery has great simplicity, strength and honesty of execution. If a bowl is to be made, his only real concern is that it be synonymous with the use for which it is intended. His expression is in the success of the "bowl-ness" of the bowl. He is in fact "being a bowl"! This approach is also involved with the ritual use of objects. In the use of things we have lost much of their ritual significance through industrial products. A cup of Michael Henry's reminds us again that there is much significance in the act of drinking.

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Michael Henry
15" high
from recent
exhibition, 1965.

B. C. POTTERS' GUILD MEETINGS

- Executive Meeting, February 1, 1966

In response to a request from Nan Berkeley for some representative pieces by B. C. craftsmen for a Craft Show in Wellington, New Zealand, in May, a small collection of pots by Tam Irving, stitchery by Elfleda Wilkinson, and weaving by Gertrude Griffin is being sent.

Hycroft has been booked for Nov. 22 and 23, 1966, for the Second Annual B. C. Potters' Guild Sale, to be held on Nov. 23, 1966.

The Constitution and By-Laws of the B. C. Potters' Guild, as drawn up by Eric Marsden, were discussed, approved and adopted.

It was decided to institute a column in the Western Potter for "Wanted" and "For Sale" items, at a charge of 10¢ per word, cash with order.

* * *

- On November 30, 1965, a very pleasant General Meeting, mostly social in character, was held at the Gallery of B. C. Arts, and the President gave a report on the very successful Hycroft Sale, as a result of which potters were reimbursed a total of \$1,417.90, and the Guild treasury was enriched by \$321.90.

* * *

- On March 2, 1966, a General Meeting was held, also at the Gallery of B. C. Arts, at which Glenn Lewis gave us a comprehensive report on the meeting in Calgary of the Canadian Crafts Association (formerly the Canadian Council for the Environmental Arts).

The president announced that through our efforts Ceramics '65 will probably come to the U. B. C. Gallery for July and possibly August of this year. Also, the Western Canadian Crafts Show to be held at the Vancouver Art Gallery is now tentatively scheduled for next fall.

1966 We have agreed to sponsor a workshop conducted by the well-known New Zealand potter, Mr. Harry Davis, at the U. B. C. Ceramics Hut on April 12, 13 and 14. A special bulletin giving further details will be issued in due course.

The resignation of Mrs Yolande Newby, who has returned to California to live, was accepted with regret.

The highlight of the evening was the showing by Mr. Stan Clarke of an excellent collection of slides, first of Canadian pots in Ceramics '65, and then as a contrast, the more avant garde American pots of the Northwest Craftsmen's Show of '65 at the Henry Gallery in Seattle. Then Dr. Saxton showed slides of the famous primitive Mexican potter Dona Rosa, at work, and allowed us to examine with eye and hand some examples of her beautiful work.

FORTHCOMING NEWS

We are very happy that Harry Davis from New Zealand will be giving a workshop in April. He ran a very interesting Pottery on a water mill in Cornwall, England, before moving to New Zealand. He is very well versed in workshop methods and has one of the best funds of technical knowledge about pottery, minerals, etc. in the world. Besides Mr. Davis' visit, we may also have the pleasure of three or four more renowned potters. We would like them to give us the benefit of their experience if we can arrange it. Bernard Leach may visit us sometime in May. John Reeve and perhaps Warren McKenzie from Minnesota may come in July and Gwyn Hanssen may come during the summer on her return to Europe from Australia. We would indeed be fortunate to have these potters in a series of workshops. Shall we try?

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VANCOUVER ISLAND REPORT

In the first quiet months of the New Year when others relax, Potters everywhere are busy replenishing their stock after the holiday rush.

The Victoria potters organized a successful pre-Christmas sale of their work at the Art Gallery. We hope that perhaps next year this can be extended to represent the whole Island.

Up and down it's three hundred miles, potters work alone with little opportunity to compare and talk pots. Mrs Zellah Clements at Twin Beaches on Galiano Island is an example of individual effort. From her house overlooking the sea, she sells her earthenware pottery and also supplies an outlet in Nanaimo. In the beginning she used local clay, but as her market grew, and the number of their cottages for rent grew, it was too time-consuming. Recently she has become interested in Mosaics and now has orders for decorative panels in several new houses.

We welcome two new members to the Western Potters. Mrs Burchett in Tofino .. one of whose pots was bought by a friend of mine; Mrs Slessor at Ladysmith was a pupil of Hilda Ross some years ago at U. B. C. Summer School. After a bout with illness she is equipping a studio and beginning again.

The 16th Vancouver Island Jury exhibition of Painting, Sculpture and the Graphic Arts, begins at The Victoria Gallery on April 19th. Further information on submitting entries will be in the next Gallery Bulletin and the newspapers.

Mr. Colin Graham hopes to have an Island-wide arts and crafts show in the fall. This is still in the planning stage.

Gerry Weld, Khenipsen Rd., R. R. 1.,
Duncan, B. C.

Following Tommy Kakinuma's one-man invitational show at Hamilton Art Gallery, Hamilton, Ontario, he has received invitations to hold two additional exhibitions. The first will be a two-man show with Chizuko Shimana of Toronto at the Royal Ontario Museum, opening on April 25th, in conjunction with the travelling exhibition, "Art Treasures of Japan" which shows also in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The second is an invitation by the Canadian Handicrafts Guild to hold a one-man show in Montreal.

OKANAGAN REPORT

A representative of the National Gallery visited the Okanagan area before Christmas to ask craftsmen to send work to the National Gallery for jurying toward the Fine Crafts Show, so a good many crates of work have been rolling east this January, I expect.

Walter Dexter is turning his hand from the wheel to the saw to make additions to a house which he and Muriel have purchased just down the road from Walter's studio at Okanagan Mission.

Frank Poll and Denise have moved from Okanagan Centre to a house on the outskirts of Vernon where Frank is busy setting up a business-like pottery. He says he bought the house because his clay supply is right under his feet.

Santo Mignosa, instructor in ceramics at the Kootenay School of Art, Nelson, B.C., is one of six Canadians whose work appears in the 10th International Exhibition of Ceramic Art at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. He is represented by a ceramic sculpture entitled "The Swimmer".

Zelko Kujundzic is teaching eight students in "Ceramic Fundamentals" under the Kelowna Night School Programme for Adults.

I am teaching thirty-one students under a similar programme in Vernon and two pottery workshops through the Recreation Commission, one in Kelowna and the other in Armstrong. I have promised my night school students that we will end our winter session with a pasture firing in the spring. Several dedicated types have been out collecting cow pats on their farms between snow falls to have plenty of fuel for the event. I hasten to add that we have other firing facilities to use in the high school as well as our pats in the pasture.

Frances Hatfield.

"The Western Potter" is published by the B. C. Guild of Potters, quarterly. It is supplied to members free. Membership dues are \$3.00 a year. Individual copies of "The Western Potter" are 25¢. Advertisement rates are 10¢ a word for sale and want ads; \$40 for a full page ad; \$20 for a half page; \$10 for a quarter page; and \$5 for one-eighth page. Inquiries should be addressed to Mrs Avery Huyghe, Corresponding Secretary, 4656 W. 3rd Ave., Vancouver 8.

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Send cheques plus exchange to Treasurer of the B. C. Potters' Guild:

Mr. Jack Diggle,
190 East Kings Road,
North Vancouver, B. C.

(Membership Fee - \$3.00)

B. C. POTTERS' GUILD
Corresponding Secretary,
4656 West 3rd Ave.,
Vancouver 8, B. C.